



Food for Thought

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It is well-known that body parts often form part place-names and place-name elements. When this happens, it is usually because the observer (namer) sees a likelihood of a landscape feature with, say, a person's shoulder, nose or foot. Less known is, however, that food terms occasionally also creep into our place-names. A fine example of this is the Danish field name *Flæskebøste*, which is a Jutish dialect word for a smoked ham. It is mainly found in Southern Jutish field names but is also recorded once in East Jutland, north of Aarhus (see figures 1 and 2).

And what is a smoked ham doing in field names, then – you might ask? In some cases it is seemingly the name of an elevation, and, thus, the lumpy appearance of a hill may well have been compared to that of a smoked ham. That certainly seems to be the case with the East Jutish example and possibly also in some of the Southern Jutish names.

Whatever the reasons behind naming, there can be little doubt, however, that the strangeness of a smoked ham suddenly occurring as a field names set the local inhabitants' minds into action. In the East Jutish example, the field of *Flæskebøste* is accompanied by the localities *Flæskeside* (A Side of Pork) and *Svinehoved* (Pig's Head). Here, one kind of pork product has spurred a small, local name environment commemorating products from pork. In Southern Jutland, on the other hand, they seem to have been more interested in eating the smoked ham, as in two unrelated examples, the neighbouring field to a *Flæskebøste* is called *Sennepkop* (Mustard Pot) – you need mustard for your smoked ham.

However, the fun doesn't stop there. In the Southern Jutish parish of Ravsted, the name *Flæskebøste* seems to have spurred a regular naming spree. Next to *Flæskebøste* we find *Tallerken* (Plate), *Gaffel og Knive* (Fork and Knives), *Kopper* (Cups) and *Kruller* (Cups, i.e. a local dialect word for cups made out of clay). Not only do we have a nice smoked ham here, we have the entire cutlery to feast on.

What is going on here? Since we are dealing with historical material, it is difficult to know what came first of the names but it seems very clear that the unusual semantics of one name has triggered a re-conceptualisation of the name environment surrounding a place-name like *Flæskebøste/Smoked Ham*. The unlikely form of a name spurred the local people's imagination and gave rise to topically related names in the vicinity – a new name environment was born!

Merry Christmas everyone, let there be feast and merriment – possibly also a slice of smoked ham with a nice big, dollop of mustard...

Peder Gammeltoft

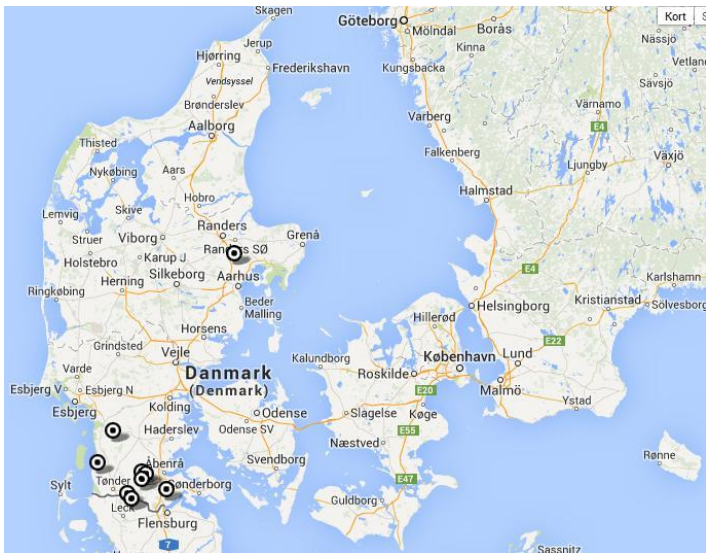


Figure 1. Occurrences of the name Flæskebøste in Denmark



Figure 2. Dialectal distribution of the word flæskebøste in Jutland.